# Interview with William W. Lehfeldt

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

WILLIAM W. LEHFELDT

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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*Q: Today is April the 29th 1994. This is an interview with William W. Lehfeldt, Bill, a friend of mine. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. We're doing this at DACOR Bacon House.*

Bill, I know that you were born in California in 1925. Could you give me some of your background, a bit about your family, your parents and all, what they were doing; and then about your early upbringing.

LEHFELDT: I'm a product of the move West. My forebears on my mother's side, are old-line people in Kentucky and Virginia and Pennsylvania. Her parents moved to Galesburg, Illinois, where she was born. Then her father, who was an engineer on the Burlington & Northern, I guess it was in those days, moved to Montana where they homesteaded in the old Huntley Project. They were one of the first homesteaders there. That's where my mother met my father, who is the product of a German background family that settled in Iowa, where he was born in Dennison.

His father, my grandfather, who was an Iowa State Senator at one point, a man of some substance in Iowa. He established way back then a system of bringing skinny lambs by rail from Montana through Dennison, Iowa where they off-loaded the skinny ones and on-

loaded the fat ones for the market in Chicago, which was a saving of a good deal of freight cost.

My father, who was the single surviving son of my grandfather's second wife, he had 3 sort of mail-order brides I think from Germany. When my grandfather remarried the third time, after the second wife (my grandmother) had died of measles along with my father's three sisters, he sent my father to Montana. He was then 12 years old and knew no English although born in the United States. Dennison was a German town: German opera, German newspaper, German schools—when he went to Montana to live, sort of exiled to get away from the third wife I guess, he went to his first English speaking school. He told me many years ago that his teacher put him into the back of the room because the only English words he knew were swear words. At any rate, he grew up between Montana and Iowa; attended Iowa State then went back to work in Iowa on his father's ranch. He met my mother there who was then 18 or 19, a school teacher.

*Q: The West must have been absolutely populated with school teachers cause you hardly hear of anybody whose father didn't marry a school teacher.*

LEHFELDT: My three brothers and one sister who later died, were born in Montana. They drove from Montana to California. My father traded the ranch in Livingston, Montana for a ranch in Livingston, California. They drove in 1917 from Montana to California in a Grant, a grand old automobile. I've got pictures of it with my mother and father, and the four kids on the way to California.

*Q: Driving them must have been something.*

LEHFELDT: It was a real chore. My eldest brother, who is now 83, can remember some of it; the others don't remember very much of it.

My father had a dairy, a rather large one. He was a member of the board of a bank, the school board and all that sort of thing. Then California put in tuberculosis testing and he

lost 95% of his herd. Of course in the early 1920s there was a good deal of depression even then and he went bankrupt. We moved, before I was born, from the dairy to a farm that he both leased and bought, in the middle of a Japanese settlement in San Joaquin Valley called the Yamata Colony. It still exists; all my neighbors when I was born, all my school friends, all my childhood friends through Pearl Harbor were mostly Japanese-Americans.

*Q: Where was this? Near Bakersfield?*

LEHFELDT: No, it was north near Merced, between Merced and Modesto. It is Gallo wine country along with Foster Farms which is the West coast version of Perdue.

*Q: Chicken farms.*

LEHFELDT: It's all headquartered in that area but it's also a rich center for lots of fruits, apricots, almonds, peaches, etc. It is known to some as the sweet potato capitol of the world allegedly, and a few other things.

Besides the Japanese, who were important but sort of inward looking, there were a lot of Portuguese, some Italians, some Filipinos. A lot of Mexicans, most of them working as day-laborers on the railroad, the watermelon patches and all that sort of stuff.

So that my childhood, both through grammar school and high school, was a mixed culture sort of background. Livingston, a farm town really, when I left there were 711 people in it, now it's up to almost 10,000 I think. It was an interesting and great place to grow up.

The San Joaquin Valley was still pretty much desert. Water hadn't come everywhere. They depended on rain even though it was inadequate. We did have a couple of irrigation systems, the Tuolumne and Stanislaus River systems and the Merced system were in their infancy but we had irrigation water rather broadly.

Most of us learned to swim in the irrigation ditches in the summertime. We didn't have private swimming pools. There was something called the Rookledge Corners Plunge which was a real treat during the summer. But most of us learned to swim in the irrigation ditches. At any rate, that's where I went to school.

When World War II began, just as an example of the importance of the Japanese, my high school which had over 400 students was reduced to under 200 when the Japanese were moved out.

*Q: This was such a traumatic and sort of dark episode in recent American history. What was the attitude at the time? How did you feel about it and your family feel about this?*

LEHFELDT: Most of them were church friends of ours, they were either Presbyterians or Methodists. Unlike other parts of California, in the Livingston area no Japanese family sold or lost their property. A committee was set up, including my father, to manage their farms while the were gone. So when they came back, although their farms may not have been as well managed, they still had an income while they were gone and they had a place to come to when they came back from their “relocation.”

So as a result many of my Japanese friends are now millionaires. They were very successful. Some of the side effects of the dispersal of the Japanese around the country you can see, just in microcosm, in Livingston.

I don't know whether you remember a singer by the name of Pat Suzuki, she's from Livingston. She starred in THE FLOWER DRUM SONG on Broadway. I remember her as a little 5 year old girl belting out “God Bless America” in 1941. Then she went on, of course, to bigger things.

The Chairman of the Biology Department of Dartmouth was a Livingston Japanese. The head of surgery at Cleveland Medical School was Ida Nakashima, one of my sister's classmates. Joe Kamiya, who was one of the discoverers of the Alpha wave, and a

professor at the University of California at Berkeley. He went to school in the East, of course, but was a product of Livingston. These were high class people. They all had the drive to succeed and they have succeeded both at home and outside. I think without the war experience, many of them would not have done what they have done.

*Q: It's a horrible thing but sometimes a kick from the behind gets people, including many of the people in the Foreign Service, dragged into the army or something like that.*

LEHFELDT: There are a couple of members of my Livingston friends in the Foreign Service, Japanese, they're retired.

Back to your original question, what did we feel at home.

We felt a great loss of friendship. There were certain people in the community, including the editor of our weekly newspaper, who were very anti-Japanese. Curiously enough his grandson, Delwin Roy, is the head of the Hitachi Foundation here in Washington. There was this undercurrent, there was this suspicion, that was built up during that time of possible sabotage and espionage.

*Q: How about your dad? Your name is Lehfeldt, we were at war with Germany and Japan. Was anybody pointing out the off thought behind this?*

LEHFELDT: Curiously enough, at least to me, that never was raised. Of course it was in World War I.

*Q: My grandfather was a Civil War veteran, whose name was Laukner, had real problems in Chicago.*

LEHFELDT: But World War I was different. That's what broke up, for instance, my father's hometown in Iowa which was a German town. World War I came around and they

deserted the German language, the German newspaper became English language, all that sort of thing.

But I never felt German particularly. My father didn't speak German, I guess he knew it. I remember when he visited Iowa once to visit his stepmother. She was in her 90s then. She asked him to stop by to pick up some “mehl”, he stopped at the post office. What she wanted was flour so his German was a more than a little rusty.

But no, that never became a problem.

So in 1943 when I was graduated from high school I immediately went into the Army. Again, the question never arose.

*Q: What did you do in the Army?*

LEHFELDT: I first went into what was then known as the ASTP program, the Army Specialized Training Program. I was first sent to Fort Benning for basic training, I along with a number of other kids. It was an astounding experience because I had never—this brings to mind that last night I saw Schindlers' List—I had never met a Jew before in my life. Here I was, in a 20-man hut in the Harmony Church area in Fort Benning, and 18 out of the 20 were Jews.

*Q: ASTP was a program where they gave the equivalent of an IQ test and the high achievers were set off.*

LEHFELDT: We were supposed to become specialists. I was to study electrical engineering, of all things, because I was good in mathematics and chemistry, I was assigned to Pomona College in California. When we were all ready to go to our colleges they canceled the program and shipped our behinds off to, in my case along with 10,000 other ASTP trainees, to the 94th Infantry Division in Camp McCain (near Grenada),

Mississippi. There we trained and then went over to Europe in time for a great deal of the festivities there.

*Q: I think it's important to get a feel for who the people are in the Foreign Service, what were you doing in the 94th?*

LEHFELDT: I was a plain old infantry man, 17 and 18 years old at the time. I became a BAR man, a Browning Automatic Rifleman, which was a very heavy thing. I was pretty good at it. When we landed in France after D-Day, I wasn't in on D-Day, our division was sent immediately over towards Brest, Lorient and St. Nazaire, to close those pockets or at least hold them. When the Battle of the Bulge began they shipped the whole division immediately over to the Saar-Moselle (Luxembourg) area where we spent most of the rest of the war.

I was one of 7 in my company, including the cooks, that were never wounded or evacuated for frostbite or anything of that sort. At the end of the war, we ended up in Czechoslovakia in the Third Army after having helped close the Ruhr pocket. We crossed the Saar River; took part in the clearance of the Rhineland and took the major cities of Trier and Ludwigshafen. I was just an infantry man but rose to be a platoon sergeant at the end of the war.

I might add I spent 3 days in Paris over VE Day on leave from the front. I went to the Opera on VE night, believe it or not! As I recall it was an opera I didn't know, my recollection was it was a Massanet opera, Semiramis, which I still have never heard again I don't think.

I applied to go to one of those army schools that they set up I Europe. I was sent to Biarritz in France for 3 months, from September until the end of December 1945. Studied things like Algebra and Spanish, public speaking and voice, played in the band and had a good time. I enjoyed Biarritz very much, that's where I first ran across the Foreign Service.

I was impressed because in 1945 someone drove by in a brand new American car, non-military, flying the American flag. It was the vice consul. I thought, gee, that's interesting.

I went back home and was discharged in January or February of 1946. I spent a year in California in school in what is now the University of the Pacific before I discovered what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to go to college. That was never in question. For all my brothers and my sister even in the depths of depression, there was never any question but that they were going to university. They're all university graduates and they are all in the teaching game. I decided I didn't want to have anything to do with teaching.

One of my friends at Pacific was a fellow by the name of Alex Roessler, a mixed Mexican-Dutch parentage from New Mexico, killed in the Korean War. He had a catalog for the Georgetown School of Foreign Service which I looked at and thought now that sounds like something I want to do. So I wrote back and applied and they accepted me and I came back here in early 1947.

*Q: My headquarters are in Georgetown University. Could you tell me something about the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown in this period. Most of the people, I assume, were veterans. What was your attitude, were they pushing anything, a little about that.*

LEHFELDT: The School of Foreign Service at that time was still sort of a stepchild of Georgetown University. Foreign Service School students could not live on campus for instance, only College denizens could. There was a very definite caste system.

The School was housed, except for some classes in Healy building, in temporary buildings across 37th Street. That's where most of our class activities took place. On the faculty, there was very little religious evident in the faculty of the School of Foreign Service at that time. Father Walsh who was the Dean and the founder of the School, was still teaching. I took a course in either logic or ethics from him.

Most of us were veterans. There were a few non-veterans but most were veterans. Some of them did some surprising things.

We had an old professor by the name of William Boyd Carpenter who taught Political Science. It was his wont to come into the class (he was a Chinese scholar and knew a number of different languages), and write something on the board. Usually nobody could identify what it was. One day one of the veterans got up, slammed his books together, picked them up and walked out. This was the last time that Boyd Carpenter wrote anything on the Board. It was in some Chinese dialect that said, “If you can read this you are excused. Please get up, take your books and go home.”

Many of the professors were also government officials of one sort of another. One required course that was the bane of everybody's existence was only given on Friday nights from 8 till 10:00, a course called INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION. The teacher was John Hickerson, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, or UN Affairs I guess it was called in those days.

This was really a chore. We couldn't fail the course. We had to be there, we had to sign-in. I took courses at 7 in the morning, day and night.

But the veterans were serious students, anxious to make up for lost time, and were by and large responsible for changing the character of the whole of Georgetown, I believe, in the late 40s. The church authorities, who were then running Georgetown, didn't know quite how to deal with these guys. I remember the Freshman handbook that I first got had a note in it saying: Informal attire, by whatever name it is called, is unbecoming a Georgetown student. Which meant we were required to wear coat and tie according to the handbook. The veterans wouldn't do it, they weren't about to put up with that nonsense.

But they were serious students; they achieved a lot. One of my classmates worked with Douglas South Freeman and after Freeman's death completed

*Q: “Lee's Lieutenants” and “George Washington”.*

LEHFELDT: And won a Pulitzer Prize for his work. He was one of the real snazzy dressers in our class.

I was surprised frankly how few got into the Foreign Service. Most of them went into business, many of them are around here. In those days we had several fraternities who had houses off campus, they have since been forbidden by the University.

I belonged to something called Delta Sigma Pi which was technically, and it still exists at Georgetown, a Business Administration and Accounting fraternity. It was social just as far as we were concerned, just as much as Delta Phi Epsilon which is the Alpha chapter of the Foreign Service fraternity around the country. Foreign Affairs fraternity I guess it's called, they're still on the corner of Prospect and 35th Street.

There was Kappa Kappa Alpha, another Business Administration fraternity, there were 3 or 4 of them.

At any rate what I was getting to, the membership was close-knit and mostly veterans. At the end some non-veterans of course came in but most of them went into business. We still see each other quite a lot. We're rather close friends although we don't work together many of us.

One of my classmates, for instance, was Bob Anders who frankly didn't have a distinguished Foreign Service career but he was stuck in Tehran and came out through the Canadian caper. Another was Bob Bee who was Treasury Rep in Turkey and Sweden and in Germany. He became an AID official in Pakistan and then later senior vice president of Wells Fargo. In later years he's been running his own bank in London.

Dick Bloomfield is a classmate, Frank Ortiz is a classmate (both Ambassadors). Joe Cunningham was a classmate. He was the one with the highest score, at that time, ever

in the Foreign Service exam. But he ran afoul of someone in Luxembourg, as I recall, and didn't fulfill his promise. He was a very brainy guy.

A number of others have distinguished themselves in one way or another but most of them went into business and still are great supporters of the School of Foreign Service.

*Q: You graduated when?*

LEHFELDT: 1950.

*Q: What did you do?*

LEHFELDT: I immediately, because one of my friends at school ran the Diplomatic Courier Service, Ed Brennan, went into the State Department as a diplomatic courier in September 1950 and spent the next, almost a year, doing courier work until I passed the exams. I discovered quickly that while being a diplomatic courier was great fun. You didn't get any place except around.

*Q: What did a diplomatic courier do in 1950?*

LEHFELDT: I was technically a trainee for most of my time in the courier service. We would leave Washington with the classified mail. One night I left Washington with 26 pouches weighing almost 2 tons to accompany down around the Latin American circuit. I dropped many of them in Puerto Rico, a lot of them in Cuba.

These were crossover points for other couriers to pick them up and take them to other posts. It was a very complicated and intricate system that couriers worked in those days. Of course the coding system, the cryptography system was nowhere nearly as adequate and quick and easy as it is now. We depended on written material being moved back and forth. The 28 bags, whatever it was, was mostly cryptography equipment.

On one of my early trips in November 1950, I left Washington the day that the Puerto Rican nationalists shot up the Blair House and the House in Congress. My first stop was in Puerto Rico where I was greeted by armed guards with jeep to escort me with all my bags. I was taken to, I forgot the name of the military base, and spent a day or night there. Then on to Havana and on to Guayaquil, Ecuador, where there was an election going on. The vice consul who met me at 2 in the morning was Pete Vaky (later a Vice Dean of the Foreign Service School), another Georgetown graduate. He was vice consul at that point.

It was fun. We'd get to stay overnight or as much as 2 or 3 days sometimes in very nice places. I remember spending 2 and a half days in Barbados waiting for the plane system to work so that we could get out again. I spent several pleasant days over Carnival in Trinidad, a couple of days in Buenos Aires. I got rained in, in a sense, because that was before the main highway from La Guaira to Caracas was completed. There was an hour and a half winding road, up and down, that was all washed out. I was stuck in Caracas for over a week.

Another time in Caracas was when they shot Delgado Chalbaud who was the head of the military junta at the time. That was when Perez Jimenez took over. Again I was stuck for another week in Caracas, curfew and all that stuff.

But the nuts and bolts of the courier service was really to move things as quickly as possible. It was an intricate question of scheduling using available airlines.

*Q: You completed this after about a year you had took the Foreign Service exam.*

LEHFELDT: I took it 3 times.

*Q: You're among many.*

LEHFELDT: That was the old 3 and a half day ordeal which was interesting. I took it when I was a junior, when I was a senior and the year I graduated. I finally passed it.

In between the time that I was sworn in as a Foreign Service office and I left the courier service, I joined the Bureau of United Nations Affairs as an administrative assistant in what was called UNI, Office of International Administration. We were responsible for the administrative participation in international organizations worldwide. I used to supervise our participation in something called, a whole bunch of little organizations, called the International Commission for the Cape Spartel and Tangier Lighthouse. It was an 8 nation organization. There was another one, International Commission for the Standardization of the Screw, so on down the line.

It was sometimes interesting, sometimes just plain boring but I worked with a lot of interesting people. George Ingram and Bill Hall, Joe Sisco, a junior officer at the time; Bob Sayre, Bill Bowdler, Carol Laise were all colleagues of mine and friends.

*Q: When you came into the Foreign Service was there training?*

LEHFELDT: When I came in I came in as a Foreign Service office class 6 in September 1952. We had junior officer training. There were 22 of us in the class including 2 women. No other minorities of any sort. Most of my colleagues, there were a few who didn't make it, were very successful. One or two died but you know Jack Linehan, Mike Newlin, Bill Edmondson, Dick Barnebey, Jim Goodby all became ambassadors. They were very good.

We spent the requisite, I think it was 3 months, as junior officer trainees then we all went off to our new posts roughly the end of December 1952.

*Q: Where did you go?*

LEHFELDT: I went first to Kabul, Afghanistan.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

LEHFELDT: From the end of December 52 till the early part of 55. I was on loan to the aid program.

*Q: Was it call AID at that time?*

LEHFELDT: It was called TCA, Technical Cooperation Administration. The ambassador was Angus Ward of Mukden fame. He didn't quite know how to deal with me because I was technically a Third Secretary, Vice Consul. I had the diplomatic titles but I was out of his control in the AID program, he didn't like it but I was the only administrative help the mission director had. At that point a fellow by the name of Bill Hayes who was an old TVA, Tennessee Valley Authority official, quite able.

The major project we had was something called the Helmand Valley Development Project. There were 2 dams built by the Morrison-Knudsen Company in the southwest part of Afghanistan on the Helmand and Arghandab Rivers. The Helmand Dam and the Kajakai Dam. They were funded to begin with by their Karakul and beryllium and other export earnings amassed during World War II. They also got some loans from the Export-Import Bank and the World Bank. We were charged with providing a technical assistance team to help them administer the whole project. My title was administrative assistant for the Helmand Valley although I was headquartered in Kabul. I did everything for the mission director. I worked on some mining projects, we had health and education projects and so on in all parts of the country. But I did get to Helmand Valley quite often.

*Q: What did you see at that time, we're talking about 52 to 55, what were American interests in Afghanistan?*

LEHFELDT: Well, rather slim. We didn't have any investments to speak of. They had a couple of strategic materials, beryllium being the principal one. That was about it. They had no oil at that time.

The Soviets hadn't really begun to do anything in Afghanistan at that time. The Afghans had applied to be taken in under the Truman Doctrine which was designed to help Greece and Turkey. Of course the Afghans at that time enjoyed bad relations with everybody—with the Iranians, with the Russians, with the Pakistanis and, of course, the Brits who were largely suspected of being the b#tes noires behind everything that went wrong for the Afghans.

There were the 3 Afghan-British wars, the Afghans asserted they won all 3 of them. They did win two. The 3rd, one which was at the end of World War I, was a little dubious. At any rate, on Independence Day they would parade all their captured British guns and so forth. It was kind of a rag tag army.

They applied to join a lot of things. They wanted military aid because they were afraid of the Russians. Mr. Truman turned them down flat as did President Eisenhower.

It was a country that was largely tribal and kept together by tribal loyalties. that was the role of the Royal family in those days, to serve as the glue. The King was the son of one of three the brothers who had taken power after a guy that was known as Bacha Saqao (literally Water Boy), who had replaced Amanullah as King. Bacha Saqao was an illiterate but charismatic commoner. Saqaos still brought water around in their goat goatskins in my day, it was alleged to be pure drinking water, but you had to boil it. Bacha Saqao led an uprising that tossed out Amanullah who was trying to emulate Ataturk and modernize Afghanistan, if that can be imagined. According to popular understanding, Amanullah's downfall came because he tried to remove the turbans from the men. He built a number of palatial offices outside of town, in his new capital Darul Mo-alamein. He built the first railroad between the new headquarters for the government and downtown Kabul. You can still see some of the remains of that. It was destroyed when Bacha Saqao took over.

But then the elite leaders of many of the tribes, the Mohammedzai being the principal group and the group from which the royal family came, took power. There were 3 or 4

brothers—Shah Mahmoud, Wazir Ali, —neither of which became king, and Nadir Shah who did indeed become king. I guess maybe just the 3.

At any rate, when I got there King Zahir, the son of Nadir who as assassinated in 1932, who is still alive near Rome, was the King, he was considered a sort of figurehead, but an important one. His uncles, assisted by some first cousins, were running the country; Shah Mahmoud was the Foreign Minister. They were all running it—one was the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Defense Minister.

Later on as the older generation passed on, the cousins of the King became more prominent. Prince Naim became the Foreign Minister succeeding Shah Mahmoud; his half-brother, Prince Daud, became Defense Minister, etc. He later became Prime Minister and finally, president, after deposing his cousin.

It was Prince Daud who decided that since the US wasn't going to help then he would seek to take some limited help from the Russians in terms of military assistance.

I have 2 periods of association with Afghanistan, I was later the Afghan Desk Officer.

*Q: Why don't we concentrate on the 52 to 55 period.*

LEHFELDT: At that time it was still pretty much the old men who were running the show.

*Q: Did you have much contact with the Afghan government?*

LEHFELDT: Yes I did, partly because I was the only guy in TCA beside the mission director who knew what to do. I wrote up the budgets for those years, I negotiated agreements with the then Minister of Health (later Prime Minister), the Minister of Education. We funded a number of things. I signed for the US government believe it or not. Yes I did have a good deal to do with the senior people.

This was one of the things that upset Ambassador Ward because here I was, a Third Secretary, doing all of these things.

I also represented the mission twice at Mission Directors conferences because Bill Hayes was off on leave. I went to Istanbul for a meeting with Governor Harold Stassen who had then been named by Eisenhower to take over what became the International Cooperation Administration. I represented the Afghan Mission in Athens the following year, 1954.

It was in the Stassen meeting that I first raised, first raised by any mission I believe, the question of what U.S. might to do to counter what was the opening of the Soviet aid efforts around the world. Afghanistan was their first real try at putting on something besides subversion and military threats. They built bakeries, silos and whatnots that everybody could see in Kabul.

I raised the question first in Istanbul in December of 1953. It was considered rather seriously whether or not we should try to compete with similar highly visible projects. The answer was eventually-no. We would not in any way compete. We would keep the level of our aid about where it was and do the things that we thought were most necessary. And that was mostly the AID stance all during those two plus years that I was in Kabul.

It was a very interesting time. Kabul was a remote city. We had power for 6 hours a day. Unpaved streets, one mile or so of paved streets, done by Morrison Knudsen as a demonstration project. It took us 14 or 16 hours to drive up to Kabul Peshawar, Pakistan, which was our only way in and out, including through the Khyber Pass into Pakistan. And much more important to the defense of Afghanistan, there was another pass the name inside Afghanistan, the Lataband. You'd drive up through creek beds and lots of other things to get there.

Later, this is jumping ahead in time, the U.S. built the highway between Pakistan border and Kabul. It then took 4 hours, 3 and a half hours.

*Q: How did you find dealing with the Afghan government? It was tribal and all that.*

LEHFELDT: Actually the ministers at the time had been young men who'd been picked prior to World War II for foreign training. Most of them were American educated. The Minister of Education was American educated (Berkeley), the Minister of Health was a doctor whose brother, Dr. Abdul Khayum (PhD, Chicago) lives here in Maryland. He was vice president of Helmand Valley Authority, married an American. Dr. Hakimi, deputy minister of Finance, another American wife. There were a number of senior people of this sort who were either American educated or British educated. So they were reasonably easy to deal with. They had to be because I was not given any language training to speak of before I went there. What I was given was a couple of hours of Tehrani Farsi not Dari Farsi. It was mutually unintelligible in a way because Kabuli Farsi, Afghan Farsi of the day, was I suppose akin to the relation of Quebecoise to modern French. There were a lot of archaics and so on, a lot of mixture of Pushtu and Urdu in the Afghan language.

One of the things that I had to do when I was there was to set-up a staff house for the AID mission, the TCA mission. So I rented a big house with 8 bedrooms, I guess, and staffed it. Of course it had a mud roof. When it rained it leaked. The roofs were held up with long wooden trees, poplar trees, lined and covered mud and straw, and what-not on top. The wood extended right through the chimneys, would catch fire and smoulder for days. Let's say it was an experience.

*Q: Your ambassador was one of the characters of the Foreign Service, Angus Ward, who'd been a prisoner in Mukden, in isolated Mukden. By the time he was Chinese before he came out, his language especially. What was your impression. How did he operate? Any stories?*

LEHFELDT: He was an unusual man, as you pointed out. When he arrived in Kabul he drove up from Karachi with his International power wagon and his Cadillac.

*Q: And his cats?*

LEHFELDT: And his cats, ashes of cats, and his wife, Irmgard. She was another one of the genuine characters of the Foreign Service.

*Q: Talk a little about her too.*

LEHFELDT: I will a little bit.

Ambassador Ward was a very correct gentleman. I learned a good deal from him as a matter of fact. If you put aside his idiosyncrasies he had a lot to teach. He taught me a lot about the niceties of the Foreign Service. How to really be a diplomat, in a way.

He had a lot of funny habits. I remember the first New Year's I was there. His habit was to call on his junior officers early in the morning of New Year's day. Nobody warned me about this. Our house-boy, Ghulam, came in to me at 8:00 on New Year's day and said, “The Ambassador is here.”

I said, “You've got to be kidding Ghulam. Go away, leave me alone.” So I didn't actually get up and greet him. There was no way I could.

He did this around the whole staff, to everybody's chagrin. The next year however, everybody was prepared for it.

If he had let us know—but that was not his style.

He would get to the office early in the morning and work on his 6 or 7 language dictionary because he spoke Persian and Russian and French and German and I don't know what else. This was his life's love.

His other love—because he had a red hot temper he would work it out by building boxes, packing boxes. He would get the best cedar from the northern part of Afghanistan and

have it cleaned down to beautiful planks and build packing boxes. So when he went home, actually when he retired they moved to Spain, he had some absolutely gorgeous wood to use for whatever he wanted to use.

One story about his temper—I wasn't along on this but Leon Poullada certainly was, and Ozzie Day was, and a few others whom you may or may not know—but they went off in his power wagon. They had 2 cars, both four-wheel drive, his personal one and the embassy carryall. The Poulladas, and I've forgotten who else were with them up in the Hazarajat which is in the middle of the country, largely Mongolian in populace, mostly untouched by foreigners. Highways or roads were nonexistent.

They were driving along when they had a flat tire. They stopped to get out the spare and change the tire. As Abdullah, his driver at the time, started unpacking things, he unpacked slower and slower and slower because he had realized he had not packed the spare tire. When it became clear to the Ambassador what had happened, instead of saying anything he got a piece of wood out along with a handful of nails and a hammer. He started hammering nails into the wood, pulling them our, hammering them in, etc., just to control his temper.

The cats of course were another matter. They had several cats from China and from Kenya where he'd been Consul General in Nairobi. He also had ashes of previous cats on the mantle. There were stories, again I was not there, but the following one is are true, I know because I know the people.

They were sitting at lunch at the residence. The newly arrived Air Attach# was guest of honor, and was sitting at Mrs. Ward's right. On of the Ward's cats came up and started scratching him, really clawing at him and drawing blood. He was flinching not wanting to say anything.

Finally Mrs. Ward noticed his discomfort and said “Is the cat bothering you, Colonel?”

He said, “Well, yes frankly it is.”

“Well, no wonder!” she responded, “You're in his seat!”

They tried their best in many ways but they just didn't have the style to be nice to the staff. They would invite whole embassy over for Thanksgiving. Of course the Marines were young and hungry and unschooled. They piled to the front of the line, causing Mrs. Ward to erupt. Mrs. Ward, early in the year, would buy turkeys to fatten up but then when the time came, she couldn't bear to have them killed. So we had turkeys from the bazaar which were strong and tough. You couldn't make those turkeys tender any way, it was simply not possible.

She insisted on some punctiliousness—gloves and hats, but she had some blind spots. One such story involved the late Julie Byrd, Pratt Byrd's wife. When the Wards arrived she, Julie, sent over a plate of cookies with a welcoming note. They lived across the street from the residence. Mrs. Ward immediately sent them back with a note saying, “We don't accept charity from our staff.” At which Julie piled into her hat and gloves and went across the street and gave her a lecture on American neighborliness. To her credit, Mrs. Ward took it to heart.

*Q: She was like many of the Foreign Service wives—Mrs. Henderson and others—who really didn't understand, they came from a different*

LEHFELDT: They did indeed. They'd never served it turned out, I didn't realize it, but they never served in Washington. She had never lived in the United States except in passing so she really didn't have an understanding of what Americans were all about.

When then-Vice President Nixon came through Kabul in 1953, of course there was a large press contingent with him. The Wards gave a party for the American community, such as it was—some teachers, AID technicians, the embassy and maybe one or two businessmen, the Caterpillar representative perhaps if in town and so on. So they held a dinner. Vice

President and Mrs. Nixon were very gracious, nice speech by Mr. Nixon, after which they retired. At this point Mrs. Ward expected everybody else to leave.

But not the newsmen, they were anxious to have a drink. They hadn't had very much to go on, they were at the bar as often as they could be. Mrs. Ward was storming up and down the hallways, muttering rather loudly “What are these people doing here? Why don't they get out?”

She really detested Mrs. Henderson too, she used to call her “that Hungarian whore” or something to that effect.

*Q: Mrs. Henderson, was he at that time in Tehran?*

LEHFELDT: He was in Tehran at that time. Mrs. Ward always felt that her husband was not treated as well as he should have been.

*Q: I think Mrs. Henderson was Estonian.*

LEHFELDT: Something like that.

*Q: She had a tremendous temper too.*

LEHFELDT: Old Ward for all his other idiosyncrasies, I think he did an adequate job, more than an adequate job in Kabul. He was impressive physically. He could speak Persian very well, he'd served in Tehran. He took credit for cleaning up one of the remains of one of the ill-fated American financial missions to Iran at the end of World War II. I think he really knew how to deal with them.

*Q: So he had entree to the Afghan government.*

LEHFELDT: He rarely ever was able to take anything to them that they wanted to hear.

*Q: It was just not on our list.*

LEHFELDT: That's right. At any rate, it was a very enjoyable couple of years.

*Q: Just one last question on that, Bill. How did we view the Soviets? I mean, at this time from the Kabul point of view, what were you getting? Any emanations from your fellow officers or yourself?*

LEHFELDT: We used to go to the Soviet embassy for parties. They invited everybody as did the Foreign Ministry and other embassies. The British embassy doctor was our doctor and so on down the line. The Soviets were very suspicious and couldn't get to know them very well because they were all locked in their compounds. We only saw a few of them at official functions except for the Ambassador who was a charming fellow.

On the more mundane side, on the CIA side, every once in a while a defector would come through that was handled through Kabul. That always gave Mr. Ward a little bit of a heartburn.

*Q: That wasn't part of the old diplomacy.*

LEHFELDT: I was there when Stalin died. We didn't really know what we were going to do in terms of Soviet-Afghan or Soviet-US relations but that was when the Soviets started, really started doing their aid program.

*Q: Was there any feeling about India and Pakistan at that time?*

LEHFELDT: Oh yes. The Pakistanis were always beastly to the Afghans. They would close the border every once in a while to trade. Everything came through Pakistan, came up through Karachi, Peshawar or through Quetta. There was no real good connection between Iran and Afghanistan at the time; and certainly nothing very easy from the Soviet

Union into Afghanistan, except in the northern area. We could buy Russian kerosene and gasoline in 5, 10, or 20, I forget in how many liter tins.

The Pakistanis could control Afghanistan through their border controls. Occasionally the Afghans tried pushing for Pushtunistan which was their claim to northwest frontier provinces. The British and the Pakistanis were widely believed by the Afghans to be conspiring to keep Afghanistan in a state of subjugation.

The Indians were respected as were the Turks. The Turkish Ambassador, whose name was Cemal Yesil, we used to call Kelly Green, was a real party boy, the Iraqis were as well. The diplomatic community was close and small. Everybody was included - especially secretaries because there weren't very many young ladies around. So from a purely social point of view it was great fun.

There was a lot of fun going through the bazaars trying to find leftovers from Amanullah's days. One of my friends, who was the Assistant Air Attach#, bought a couple of baccarat crystal chandeliers from old palaces. He still has one, his ex-wife has another, they're gorgeous. You could buy Russian porcelain. It was an interesting place to be.

*Q: You left there in 1955, where'd you go?*

LEHFELDT: I was assigned to Bilbao, Spain.

*Q: Where you served from 55 to 57.*

LEHFELDT: Bilbao, of course, is the capital, a major city in the Basque country. I was first sent there as vice consul to do consular work. I then took over the economic reporting position that was there and eventually became principal officer for the last year that I was there.

I was still a bachelor so I had a different sort of life. As an official, I went to all the official things but I also had a bachelor's life. I have still a lot of friends in Bilbao.

One of my major interests, and what the embassy really wanted me to look to, was what was going on in the Basque community.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about your corner of Spain during this 55 to 57 period because it's still a problem.*

LEHFELDT: It was less of a problem in those days. This was well before the advent of the ETA organization.

*Q: That Basque terrorist organization.*

LEHFELDT: But Basque nationalism was rampant all over in the, what they considered the four provinces that made up the Spanish Basque country. Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa, Alava and Navarra. The Navarrese are a special kind of Basque. They were Carlistas, believing in the royal line that descended through the Bourbon-Parma line rather than the line that Don Juan and his son Juan Carlos I reflect, although they were about equal in legitimacy of claim to throne.

The Navarrese Basques were not necessarily Basque nationalists in one sense because the Carlistas (major movers in the succession wars of the 19th century in Spain) were a partner in the Falange with Franco from the beginning. The Basque nationalist movement, was really started in its fullest form at the end of the 19th century by Jose Antonio Aguirre, was what a number of the Spanish Basques were pushing for. People like Marquis de McMahon, whose family name is De la Sota, a very wealthy industrialist in the area exiled from the Franco days. He had bought from Vanderbilt the Vanderbilt yacht and it was used and evacuated in Dunkirk. I didn't realize until later that the house they were living

in Biarritz on the promontory was where the Commanding General of Biarritz American University was living. It was a gorgeous place, I later visited it many times.

The Villallonga family, the Aguirres, the whole set of Basque families had lost a great deal to the Franquistas at the end of the civil war. They were, during World War II, very helpful to the allies in spiriting out, through France and through Spain to Portugal, shot-down fliers or other escapees. Many Basques were given medals by the allies during World War II.

When the US and Spain signed our bases agreement, I think it was in 1952 or 1953, many of the Basques became disenchanted with Americans. They turned their medals back in. As time went on and we developed closer relations with Franco, they became more and more anti-American, in a way because they felt that they had been led down some kind of garden path. It all in a sense began with Wilson and self-determination and all that sort of thing. It's true of a lot of minorities around the world.

So it was difficult for me to get to know a lot of Basques, partly because it was difficult to learn Basque to begin with. I don't know it, I didn't know it. I know some words, some of it at any rate, but not enough. But getting out into the real Basque areas, the countryside, was a function of being friends with somebody who could take you along with them and that's what I did.

For instance, you may recall that during the civil war, a thousand or so Basque children were taken to the Soviet Union by the Spanish Republican government. The Basques for safety sake stayed there all during World War II. They were treated very generously. They were university graduates and doctorates and all sorts of things.

In the time I was in Bilbao an arrangement was made between the Spanish government and the Soviet government that would allow then mature people, twenty years later, to return to the Basque country. I got to know some of them.

There was a former Soviet General who was with the Voice of America, I can't remember his name. He came to Bilbao and I took him around to talk to a number of these people. It was a very interesting experience because he was interested in knowing what was going on. But some of these, for instance one fellow, they weren't allowed to bring in any money from the Soviet Union, or very little, but they could bring in things. The Spanish government didn't want to admit that the Soviet government had any kind of thing that was worth bringing, but one of them brought a Zil limousine, he wanted to become a taxi driver. That really upset the Spanish apple cart.

There were 2 lady Ph.D. botanists. Of course they couldn't get a job, they were sour apples. I know some of them ended up going back to the Soviet Union. For some months after they arrived you could buy in the market big tins of caviar and other things they had brought. But that was a sidebar.

The Basque nationalists were always a little bit of a chore. One had to sympathize with them for their aspirations but one really couldn't encourage them in their aspirations. So it was always a little bit of a problem.

*Q: Did you get involved in sheep herders and Senator Pat McCarran?*

LEHFELDT: I sent many alleged sheep herders to the United States. The PanAm and the TWA representatives would stream into my consular district. They would organize the lists and coach the guys as to what they were supposed to say. There were damned few sheep herders left in Bilbao. Franco had planted all the grazing areas with pine trees and eucalyptus for paper mills. So finding a real sheep herder was not easy but we sent an awful lot of them over every year.

*Q: They're in Nevada and California.*

LEHFELDT: Nevada, California, Utah and Idaho.

The head of the California range association, from Fresno, his name is John Bidagaray, would come over with someone who was known on the Hill, a lobbyist, as the Sheep Herder. I would go with them around every once in a while to Pamplona and to Vittoria and so on. We really didn't have too much control over it. It was controlled by the airlines and by the McCarran supporters.

*Q: Pat McCarran was the senator from Nevada, that was his main...*

LEHFELDT: Claim to fame for a while.

We also had the Basque-Spanish orphans program. We sent a couple of orphans to the United States, alleged orphans. They were no orphans, no question about that. It wasn't that they didn't have family to take care of them. That was an interesting time.

I was also there during the Suez.

*Q: This is October '56.*

LEHFELDT: At that time I was on assignment detailed as vice consul, consul, in Vigo. This was in the summertime, it wasn't as late as October, it was earlier than that, July I think it was.

The Spanish government customarily moved to La Coru#a, moved to Galicia, because Franco would go on his summer cruise. He was a Galician after all. He would go around to his hometown on his yacht. The Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister would trail along on land.

So when I was in Vigo was when Franco was traveling along and the Foreign Minister was there. John Davis Lodge and Homer Byington were also trailing the Foreign Minister because they had to present demarches of one sort or another.

*Q: Lodge was the ambassador and Byington the DCM.*

LEHFELDT: They had to present demarches to the Foreign Minister on the US position on Suez and try to get Spanish support. So I spent a lot of time on the road between the consulate and wherever it was they happened to be. One time padding messages back and forth.

*Q: One time pad being a handwritten cryptography system which was very time consuming.*

LEHFELDT: Very time consuming and tedious. I was day and night for a week on this. It was interesting and I remember once they were meeting in a little place called La Ina. It was a resort on the coast, an island built by a soap manufacturer, very nice.

I had a message that I was instructed had to be delivered immediately to the ambassador. So I walked into a meeting he was having with the Foreign Minister, Fernando de Castiello, and handed it to him just at the time he needed it. It was fortuitous, that was one of the interesting incidents.

*Q: What was the impression you were getting of working with the embassy out of a consulate of Franco at the time?*

LEHFELDT: When I first went there, to Spain in '55, you had the feeling of depression when you got into Spain, repression. It was true. Everybody was careful what they said, what they did, how they disported themselves. Dress was very conservative, ladies were mostly in black because if they weren't in mourning for somebody immediate, they were in mourning for somebody close by. Things were not freely available in the stores. The economy was not really burgeoning at the time. The left over bitterness from the civil war and World War II was still felt by many people.

The repressions on the Basqueness, the Catalaness and the Andalucianess of people were real. The Basque language was not permitted, you could not teach in it, you couldn't have newspapers in it and so forth and so on. For instance, the bombing of Guernica was still very real.

*Q: This is during the civil war, a famous painting of Picasso.*

LEHFELDT: Guernica is a lovely town, I used to go there.

*Q: Guernica is in the Basque.*

LEHFELDT: It's somewhere between Bilbao and San Sebastian (the summer capital, eventually, when Franco stopped his yachting).

I used to go to Guernica. One of the longest names of a man I've ever heard anywhere in the world is a fellow by the name of Pedro Garaguerica Echevariettay Sauregebeitia.

*Q: You'll get a draft of this and you can spell it.*

LEHFELDT: There were people who had been there and were bombed, it was feria day, a market day. Certainly it was true that Guernica had a special place in the hearts of the Basques because that's where the kings of Spain would come to swear to uphold what was known as the Fueros de Los Basques—the rights of the Basques. And indeed King Juan Carlos has done that, he did it early in his reign.

So that Franco was viewed as a dictator, a repressor, an evil man. There were always rumors that he was deathly ill, that he was going to die. Of course I went back to Spain 20 years later and they were still rampant. They did not view Franco as a savior.

*Q: How about the embassy? What was their viewpoint?*

LEHFELDT: By that time US-Spanish relations were reasonably close. We had several bases—Torrejon, Rota, the one in Zaragoza. So the official line was very much, Franco was maybe not someone you'd want to have home for dinner, but at least we were having relations with him.

*Q: One last question on this. You mentioned Pamplona, did you have problems with Americans getting caught running with the bulls?*

LEHFELDT: I ran the bulls. No, never had any problems. I did it 2 years as a matter of fact, it was great fun. Of course I wasn't one of those “bravos” who would follow those bulls all the way from the beginning down to the end. I would run in front of them and then jump on the doorstep or the windowsill of a friend of mine on the correo. It was interesting.

*Q: Did you have consular problems? People trying to be Ernest Hemingway?*

LEHFELDT: No, I never really had any. In those days nobody got hurt. Somehow, I don't know why, we didn't have the kind of problems in the early '50s that we had later on in the '70s. People got used to the embassy and the consulates being their savior.

I remember though, one couple came to see me in Bilbao. It was shortly after I got there. They wanted me to put a car and a driver at their disposal and take them around the Basque country. Well, I declined the pleasure. They said, “But I thought that was what you were here for, to help us make friends and see the places.” A lot of people just didn't understand. As time went on they understood better what we were there for.

*Q: They finally got you back to Washington.*

LEHFELDT: No, I went first to Harvard.

*Q: You went to Harvard for what?*

LEHFELDT: Economic studies. I spent a very pleasant year there, with the likes of John Kenneth Galbraith, Dusenberry. I took courses also at MIT, Boston College.

*Q: Was this when Eugene Rostow...*

LEHFELDT: Millikan and Rostow—that was very much in vogue, at least at MIT. Now Galbraith and company didn't think much of it. My principal course there was the Galbraith seminar he set up for Third country nationals. There were a lot of eminent Pakistanis, Indians, Burmese and Indonesians. That was principally the crew, one or two Israelis. But this led Galbraith to think later on, when he was named ambassador to India, that because he knew all these senior guys in Pakistan and in India, that he could sort of be ambassador to both places. He learned quickly he couldn't.

It was a fruitful seminar to be in. I learned a great deal about economic development.

After the year I did come to Washington. I was in South Asian Affairs first as the Assistant India Desk Officer and the Ceylon India Nepal Desk Officer. I was principally the Ceylon Desk Officer. One of my first duties was to debrief, if you'll pardon that awful term, the Honorable Maxwell Gluck.

*Q: Explain what the Gluck problem was.*

LEHFELDT: Mr. Gluck was a clothing purveyor, owned the Lucky stores among other things, who was a great contributor to the Eisenhower campaign. He had been named Ambassador to Ceylor. During his hearings when they asked what the name of the Prime Minister was he said, “Well, I don't know. It's pretty long and I can't quite remember it.” From then on it was downhill.

*Q: It was a very famous case. All the papers had a wonderful time playing with it. It was Basilnitro wasn't it.*

LEHFELDT: It was Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike.

*Q: Everybody learned that very quickly, those of us in the trade.*

LEHFELDT: At any rate, he was finally approved and went on out to Ceylon. When he arrived he made friends with the Ceylonese. First when he got off the plane he said to the newsmen, “My name is Gluck, it rhymes with pluck.” He was quite popular all things considered. He was still a dress salesman, in a way.

When he left or when he went, his wife apparently had a weight problem, it would go up and down, took with her a number of different sizes of the same dress so that she would be able to wear whatever it was. When he left they put on a sale of all his stuff at the Mount Lavinia Hotel which was the best hotel in Colombo at the time. He sold off all his stuff, the whole cupboard.

Just as a postscript. His secretary, who was Georgia Tabularis, who'd been in Kabul with us as a matter of fact, told us later that when Ambassador Gluck was leaving Colombo he was carrying a package under his arm. He turned to her and said, “Here Georgia.” Well, she thought, oh well a gift finally. He'd never given her anything. “These are some dresses that my wife couldn't sell at the sale, could you sell them for me and send me the money?”

At any rate, he came back to Washington during my early days there. We had him around and saw different people to talk about what was going on in Ceylon. He was a pretty astute observer in many ways. Not everybody's idea of an ambassador but for the times he was adequate.

*Q: What were our American interests? Ceylon was really your bag.*

LEHFELDT: For the first year or so our American interests were really not many. The British still had a base in Trincomalee which they eventually gave up. That was of interest

to us but not crucial. We were interested in trying to make sure—we were interested in everybody developing into a democracy.

Mr. Dulles had special interest there because his grandparents are buried in Jaffna. They were the authors of the first English-Tamil dictionary ever written. It still exists. I'm not sure if we have a copy here but I know where there is one. So when Mr. Dulles came to Colombo at one point, but I must say in all of this, I've never been to Ceylon... I know Kandy, I know Nureylia, I know all kinds of places but I've never been there.

The Tamil Ceylonese strife was just beginning. Mr. Bandaranaike was the first real Ceylonese nationalist. Our other concern in Sri Lanka was the communists. We were concerned about communists worldwide. Because NM Perera was a Trotskyite, we had a lot of funny things going on in Ceylon. Peter Kunan, who's of Dutch descent, was the head of the communist party but they were very popular in Ceylon.

Everybody was afraid that one day we would wake up and find the communist enclave right off the Indian coast. The Russians and everybody would be all around. It never happened, and there never really was any danger, but we considered it a real threat at the time.

In some of the elections I know we spent quite a lot of money supporting one or another of the United National Party candidates, the sort of Tories, hoping against hope that Bandaranaike would lose. I've forgotten the name of the head of the UNP, the United National Party. He was an old Brit. RSS Uwardna, who was the ambassador here, was a very social animal.

The Ceylonese are attractive people. They're lots of fun, well-educated, well-meaning. If left I think without a lot of tension, the Tamils and the Ceylonese would have gotten along very well, as indeed they did at least at the upper levels.

Understanding what made a country tick was difficult. We had a lady in INR by the name of Rhea Blue. I don't know if you ever ran into her. She was an expert on Buddhism. I had a lot to do with her because to understand what made Ceylon tick at the local level, you had to understand the Indian caste system which was overlaid and understand the Buddhist differences. Piled into all that was the Brits and communism and the Trotskyites. It was sort of a microcosm of a lot of funny relationships. None of them was a great moment to the United States.

*Q: Did you move at all into the Indian side?*

LEHFELDT: I worked a good deal on the Indian side because there was a lot going on in India in the mid-'50s. Nehru was still alive. He was a very important man in many ways. We had important people as ambassadors there. The interest of the administration was very high in what was going on in India.

When Eisenhower left office and Kennedy came in, it became even more important. Chester Bowles became Under Secretary and Galbraith went to India as ambassador. The whole picture became more complicated in a way because the Kennedy administration, at least at the outset, was expecting to make India it's first showcase.

The Indians are Indians, they wanted to do things their way, not our way.

*Q: Did you find sort of the subcontinent, particularly with India, was having problems explaining to the principals, the State Department and the White House, the realities of life. I mean the realities of how India politics went, that you couldn't sweet talk them into things, they had their own course.*

LEHFELDT: They had their own course and they also had their own views of their relationship with Pakistan especially. That was always at the crux of US relations with both

countries. Pakistan chose to be an ally and India chose to be neutral. There are seeds for all kinds of conflict to begin with.

While I think we were ambivalent about the Pakistanis in many ways, there was never any question but they were members of CENTO and later the successor to CENTO. Of course the Indians were having troubles assimilating their own democracy, assimilating all the things they had inherited from the British Raj.

They had problems trying to get economic development going. We had thousands and thousands of Americans active in India in “do-gooding” of one sort or another—some of it effective, some of it not at all. The Ford Foundation certainly made India its focal point for a number of years and spent millions and millions of dollars.

Somewhere along the line the Chinese got beastly up in Ladakh. That made us look to India as a possible recipient of military assistance because they needed helicopters for those very high areas.

*Q: Was this in your time?*

LEHFELDT: It was in my time, yes.

By that time I had moved to the Afghan-Pakistan desk but we were all part of the same office. So that became a further complicated problem. It seemed to me there were some Indian elections going on. There was so much verbiage coming out of India.

*Q: Kerala, or however you pronounce it, the communist strong arm.*

LEHFELDT: Kerala was out of Madras, the Consulate General.

*Q: Those were the hard core.*

LEHFELDT: And of course things happening in Calcutta, Bombay. The efforts of Morarji Desai to become Prime Minister. The Indian Defense Minister, Krishna Menon, who was always a pain in everybody's behind.

There was always something that was riling US-Indian relations. Somewhere in the middle of all of this I was moved from Ceylon desk over to the Afghan desk, which is where they wanted me in the first place, and the assistant Pakistan desk officer. So I had moved from knowing the Indians well to knowing the Pakistanis well. That was easier, the Pakistanis are a lot easier to know in many ways than the Hindus, the Moslems maybe it's because of my Afghan.

*Q: I think it's true. There's more affinity there because the Indians tend to be very argumentative. They almost take the other side, they talk too much. Also, they're very moralistic and there's nothing a moralistic country such as ours hates more than someone who is more moralistic.*

LEHFELDT: I was for instance on the Pakistan desk when the Kennedys had their first State Visit here. President Ayub was their first State Visitor. Our relationship at that time with Pakistan was at a low. I wrote an awful lot of ceremonial speeches, looked up an awful lot of things that the President and the Secretary and what-not might use in their speeches.

The Kennedys of course took the visit and made it a social triumph. They held the State Dinner out in Mount Vernon outside. Mrs. Kennedy put on quite a show. All of these speeches that I wrote, which were sort of questioning our relationship, were turned around into very glowing full of promised things for the Pakistanis.

The only thing that I could identify, of the things I researched, was a quote from a letter of George Washington talking about Mount Vernon. He said, “I would rather be here in Mount

Vernon amongst my friends than amidst all the crowned heads of Europe." He used that in his speech at the Mount Vernon State Dinner.

Well of course after Ayub left the hangover came. Relations were even more difficult than they were because of the promises—that Kennedy treatment of Ayub could never be sustained. This is what amateurs get you into sometimes.

*Q: You were at one of the focal points between administrations when the Kennedy administration succeeded the Eisenhower. Could you talk a little about the transition? Was it a difficult one? Sometimes these are difficult, sometimes they're not but at your particular area I would have thought it would have been interesting.*

LEHFELDT: It was interesting, it was not difficult. You remember that Inauguration Day, snow up to your elbows. Mr. Herter, who was Secretary at the time for Eisenhower, was in his office saying goodbye to everybody.

I was waiting around for someone from the Pakistani embassy to deliver a personal note from Ayub to Eisenhower that I was to get and hand carry. Well, he never got there, never showed. I was living in Foggy Bottom at the time, we had a little house down there so it was easy for me to walk. So I walked out of the Department to go home and there was Secretary Herter in his limousine stuck in the traffic along with everybody else, still greeting people and having a drink. He was a real gentleman.

In terms of the transition, no, it wasn't difficult.

*Q: You weren't having some of the hard charging Kennedy types...*

LEHFELDT: We had those.

*Q: Running around like young Steven Smith and others, "Get your old fogies out, we're going to change the world."*

LEHFELDT: Yes we had some of those.

One who later was named ambassador to Turkey but he was never confirmed. He was meddling all the time during the Ayub visit. Everybody knew better how to treat the Pakistanis than the Pakistan desk, naturally. And of course Mr. Bowles came in, and Mr. Rusk.

They assured us that we should go ahead making our recommendations based on what we believed and on what we saw. They would make the political judgments. That's essentially the way it came out. But of course world events don't allow things to go on the way they planned them to begin with, that is what essentially happened. The Chinese took a different stance. The Pakistanis were always doing something different. The relations between East and West Pakistan were anything but smooth.

*Q: While you were dealing with Pakistan did you wonder about this division which is now Bangladesh? How long this thing could last?*

LEHFELDT: One of the things that brought it home to me was the Deputy Chief of Mission here, Kuaja Kaiser, was Bengali. He later, after he left Washington, was named Ambassador, High Commissioner at that point, to Australia then to China. He was Pakistani Ambassador to China when the two broke up. Kuaja with the help of the Chinese maintained his ambassadorship until he could find a way to escape without having to go back to Karachi. He then went back to Dacca where he became Foreign Minister.

You can always sense the difference in relationship between the Bengalis and the West Pakistanis. Kuaja, whose wife died not too long ago, he's dead too, his children are in the States. They're more American than anybody. He was more comfortable with the Bengali embassy people than he was with the West Pakistanis. That's not totally true but it seemed true to me.

If you look into the relationship between the two it's clear that the East Pakistanis were second class. It's militarily occupied and so on down the line. The only reason they stayed together was because the military made them stay together. Once the military was weakened sufficiently, then they split.

We had people reporting on it. There weren't any doubts on anyone's mind that this was an artificial arrangement and couldn't last. At least as I've been told.

*Q: Was there any feeling, because we don't like to see things change, you say people were reporting on it, was there any feeling that our principals didn't want to hear. I mean, "Don't talk about this place not holding together." I mean, could we say, "This is the way it looks."*

LEHFELDT: You know I can't quite recall what the senior reaction to these things was. I don't believe there was any real concern about the splitting up at the time. It was later because I was in Tehran when it did split, so I have mixed memories. We received a lot of the Bangladesh evacuees on their way home and from Pakistan as well. So I have a mixture of impressions and I can't quite sort them out right now.

*Q: Today is the 3rd of August 1994. Bill, you're now off to Argentina where you served in Buenos Aires from '61 to '62, and Cordoba from '62 to '64. What were you doing when you first arrived in Buenos Aires?*

LEHFELDT: I was Petroleum Officer and Economic Officer and that was the time when Arturo Frondizi had freed the oil exploration business. American and other companies were permitted to do exploration. I got there just as Frondizi was tossed out. So the next couple of years the oil business was caught up in political turmoil because the nationalist parties, the Radicales del Pueblo, and the conservatives particularly wanted to renationalize the oil business.

*Q: Frondizi stood where?*

LEHFELDT: Frondizi was trying to open up Argentina to the world and to stabilize the economy and to keep the Peronistas and the military at bay. He was tossed out by the military and exiled to the island of San Martin, which is the way the Argentines used to do things with their unwanted presidents. A military regime was put into his place. I forgot who the General was who was running things during those days but it was a general.

So that first year in Buenos Aires was one of sort of trying to keep an eye on things. I did manage to get around and visit the oil fields and Neuquen and the southern area. It was very interesting because the Argentine oil fields are small, spotty and require a good deal of attention and redrilling. They also have high paraffin content so it's a high cost operation.

About that time for a variety of reasons but partly to provide cover for CIA up in the hinterlands, we decided, the United States, to open up a consulate in C#rdoba which was a very important military and industrial center. Peron, when he was industrializing the country, had put a great many industries there. Automobile industry, Industrias Kaiser-Argentina, that was Kaiser car which later joined with American Motors and Renault, the Italians, Fiat, did have their own plant. Eventually, Ford came up there.

It was also the home of the oldest university in Argentina and was, traditionally, where most revolutions began.

*Q: This is why the CIA wanted to get there?*

LEHFELDT: I'm not quite sure why the CIA wanted an office there but they did. I wasn't their first choice to go and open it but the guy who they wanted to send up, a political officer, he didn't want to go. So Rob McClintock, who was the ambassador, asked if I would go. And willy-nilly, I went and opened the post. It was a fascinating experience. I

never thought I'd ever open a post in the Service, even a small 3 or 4 man consulate, but I did.

Cordoba turned out to be a very exciting place to be. We had several revolutions while I was there. I got to know Arturo Umberto, Illia, he pronounced it Eelya in those days, a little country doctor from Cruz del Eje, which was a railroad town outside of Cordoba, who was elected President.

I was the only one of the American mission in Argentina who knew him before he became a viable national candidate for the Radicales del Pueblo. So I got Rob McClintock up to meet him. He was about the only ambassador in Buenos Aires who had known him before he became president. He was a nice old man, a good country doctor. Not much of a president, he didn't last very long in any event.

He brought in, as part of the baggage, this whole fervor to renationalize the oil companies. So the Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales, which was the oil company, don't ask me why that name was given total charge again. And a man whom I knew quite well, Facundo Suarez, became the head of it. I left shortly after all of them took office so I wasn't in on the denouement.

The influence of the non-Porte#o people really became important in the...

*Q: Poriniki?*

LEHFELDT: Pardon?

*Q: The non-portinki...*

LEHFELDT: La non portena, the non Buenos Aires. The party members became rather important in the government but they couldn't keep the military under control. That's where I left Argentina.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about Robert McClintock as Ambassador?*

LEHFELDT: He was someone whom I both liked and admired and found somewhat difficult. If you'll pardon the term, he was one of my “rabbis” in the Foreign Service. He took good care of me over the years as an inspector in other lives. He was grateful for my wife's and my willingness to move up to Cordoba.

He was a brilliant man in many, many ways. I've since learned that from someone who took the trouble to go through a lot of files on people like McClintock to see how they did on the entrance exams. McClintock had historically one of the highest records on the entrance exams of anybody in the Service.

He prided himself on his abilities to draft without substantial change, thereby were some problems. He was a stylish man, he affected some things that upset people, his dogs for instance.

*Q: His poodles are well known.*

LEHFELDT: But his intelligence was so overwhelmingly evident that no one really could fault him too much for his personal idiosyncrasies.

His wife, Elenita, was a lovely lady, Chilean-Dutch extraction, again with a lot of style. The two of them made quite a splash in Argentina. He was good with the Argentine government officials. He entertained them well.

He had a good staff. Harry Conover, who was his Economic Counselor for a long time. Ed Clark was his Political Counselor. Hank Hoyt was his first DCM followed by Chuck Adair, again who was first rate. So he had a good embassy. He used it well as far as I could tell.

*Q: How did we feel about the...just trying to go back to this period, this is the Kennedy period. Do we have any attitude, as an embassy or among the officer staff, towards the military government in Argentina?*

LEHFELDT: The Alliance for Progress was of course one of the great hallmarks, allegedly, of the Kennedy era. The Argentina government, in Frondizi days, gave it a good deal of lip service and even afterwards they did. There was a lot of hope among the Argentine populace that the Alliance for Progress would have a positive effect, both on the economic life of the country as well as the political.

The Kennedy assassination, which happened when I was in Cordoba, dealt a severe blow to the psyche of the average Argentine. Nearly as I can tell, just from what I know about what happened afterwards, the Alliance for Progress just sort of died on the vine, at least in Argentina. It got lip service under the Johnson administration but it didn't lead to too much.

*Q: Where were you when the generals pushed Frondizi on?*

LEHFELDT: I was in Buenos Aires at the time.

*Q: Was this: "Well, the Argentineans are at it again!"*

LEHFELDT: That's it, nothing.

*Q: Not looking at it today but looking at it then, were you or your colleagues sort of sitting around contemplating: Why is it that the Argentineans, who seem to have probably the greatest blessing of any nation on earth, in a way as far as riches and having an articulate population without having to worry about indigenous Indians and all that, why can't they get it together?*

LEHFELDT: Several reasons, and we did talk about it a great deal, and I've talked a lot about it since. They never really developed despite all the nationalistic fervor that they could muster on a given moment. They never really developed a true nationalism. A Brit grandson or a great-grandson of an original settler was still a Brit, he would go “home” all the time.

The Germans, a large number of whom came over both during the war and after World War II, pretty much settled in obscure places for some probably good reasons. The Italians were pretty much the worker class. The Italians have always been flighty, a general proposition. The Spaniards who came again after Franco and after the civil war, made up the first or second largest national group after whatever passes for a native Argentine. There was a fourth group.

The Brits had economic power. The Spaniards, to some degree, did as well because they traced their bloodlines way back, many of them, and were proud of their conquistadore past and so on. Surprisingly, the third largest group. If you went into any town you would find a circulo Espanol, circulo Italiano and the Club Liban#s.

Los Turcos, they called them. The Syrians and the Lebanese made up a very substantial part of the population. Many of them came over to the Cordoba consulate district as wood cutters up in Santiago del Estero. The present President, Menem, is a descendent of some of those folks. They were successful entrepreneurial types. I got to know a lot of them very well.

When we left Cordoba, they organized a group of cars and families up in Santiago del Estero, which was a good 5 hours drive over not very good roads, to come down and give me a real send-off. Good Argentines were also good Lebanese and Syrians. Their Muslim past, some of them had, some of them were Christians.

Anyway, the effect was, as far as I could tell, they kept their communal differences without developing a real consensus of how Argentina should move ahead. Of course the history of the last 65 years, beginning from about 1930 until recently, was the contention between the conservatives, that is the old landowners, and old industrialists, they were in power until Peron took over in 1943 against those who wanted to displace them. That took its form in the Peronista movement, the Descamisados and, of course, it took the most extreme form.

After World War II the contention between the successors of Peron, Peron himself, his second wife was a source of a great deal of instability. The military was really the only arbiter between the two.

*Q: Where was Peron at that time? Was he in Spain?*

LEHFELDT: 1960 he was in Spain.

*Q: Were we keeping a wary eye on Peron? Did we sort of feel that he was bad news?*

LEHFELDT: He had intentions to come back which indeed he did. But at that time nobody considered him a real threat. The Peronistas would win a lot of seats and a lot of governorships in any open elections. Indeed the Peronistas did win in Cordoba, the governorship, while I was there. Just about the time I left, that was when Illia was elected president as well, they were a real political force at the polling places.

But still it was sort of the haves and the have-nots at each others' throats with a military referee.

*Q: Were we basically, at that point, observers?*

LEHFELDT: Well yes, but we were also trying to affect the economy with the theory, I think partly the premised theory, that if you stabilize the economy you can stabilize the politics.

Also the Alliance for Progress approach to things. We were also pushing for regionalism. We were hoping for a Latin American free trade association. There was another little organization at the bottom end of the continent between Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Chile, maybe Brazil, I've forgotten what it's called now. I haven't had too much to do with Argentina recently.

*Q: I'm just trying to capture the attitude towards military dictatorships back then.*

LEHFELDT: We did business with them. The military, at that time, were careful to keep a civilian in the seat. President Guido, who was president of the Senate, was installed as president after Frondizi was displaced. It wasn't a general who was actually president of Argentina, it was a civilian. So we had a fig leaf but it was always clear that he was a creature of the military.

*Q: But also things hadn't turned really sour had they, at that time? Did you have the disappearances and that sort of thing?*

LEHFELDT: No that happened just after I left but the Tupamaros, which were part of that movement, were beginning to become evident. It wasn't until after I left that the desaparecidos and the Tupamaros and the death squads of the military police and so forth occurred, so I can't really comment on that.

The military themselves, of course, were split. They had the Rojos and the Azules, the Blues and the Reds, that didn't mean any kind of communism. They would have arguments amongst themselves.

I remember at Cordoba, at one point, one day I went on down to the office and Mariella (my wife), the Industrias Kaiser Women's Club, the American Women's Club or something, were to go out to some estancia for a picnic. Mariella and the two ladies from the consulate arrived there and nobody else was there. Showed how informed I was because

the Kaiser people had been told to stay home, that something was going to happen that day. Nobody told me.

Mariella and her friends drove between the gendarme school, the infantry school, the artillery school, the air force school and that's where the fire was running out. That night, of course, there was no electricity, but there were tracer bullets and ack-ack and everything else going through the air and all over the place. Nobody got hurt, eventually they settled it all.

The Argentines weren't bloodthirsty. They became bloodthirsty later on, but at that time there were certain rules that one followed in raising the flag of revolt.

*Q: As an economic officer this is a question I try to put from time to time, was there any great push for using American influence to get American firms into the place?*

LEHFELDT: There were a number of American firms already there: Westinghouse, General Electric, Ford, Industria Kaiser. Those were jeeps. They were all there in sizable presence. The drug companies were there. The American Chamber of Commerce was a very important organization then in Buenos Aires. Not so much in other areas but BA was, of course, the center of gravity. Half the population was in the Buenos Aires area. That was, of course, another source of some instability.

Representing American firms was not a difficult thing because they were there in presence and in large measure. American banks were there—Citibank, Bank of Boston and so forth, Bank of America—were very important folk. The oil companies, of course, were very important depending on what current policy the government was.

*Q: You mentioned, I try to document these, you were in Cordoba when Kennedy was assassinated. How did this hit there?*

LEHFELDT: It was a real traumatic experience. In Cordoba they had the practice of when something absolutely dire occurred, and it occurred once or twice in the memory of man there, they sounded all the sirens and rang all the bells. When the news of Kennedy's assassination finally arrived that happened. Everybody stopped and wondered what the hell had happened because that really signaled a serious occurrence.

When the word got out, I was visited by the whole city council at the office that afternoon. The Governor and all the military officers called on me and signed the books and so forth. There were memorial service after memorial service after memorial service all over. It was genuine as far as I could tell.

It was a sort of trying time because the Argentines didn't know Johnson. They didn't know what had caused the assassination. They were afraid it might trigger something more drastic. But I think the genuine appeal of Kennedy as a person was what triggered this outpouring of affection.

*Q: What about the issue of the Falklands or the Maldives?*

LEHFELDT: It was there and we knew about it and we knew it was a burr, but it was not the most important thing in there. Every once in a while they would have their turn knocking the Brits but nobody took it very seriously.

*Q: Were there any sort of serious problems, at the time you were there, that would affect us? Any political problems outside of the internal ones?*

LEHFELDT: No. The Argentines were not making waves in those days. They weren't necessarily supporting us the way they do today for instance. I was amazed to discover that the Argentines are going to authorize a force to join us in Haiti. That would never have happened in our day.

*Q: We were seeing everything in terms of East-West preserve. The Soviet Union, were they a factor?*

LEHFELDT: They were not a factor.

*Q: Castro?*

LEHFELDT: This was early Castro days. Che Guevara was, at that point, was he in Bolivia at that point? I don't think he had got down there yet. This was a little before that became a heavy problem. But everybody was concerned about Castro but it wasn't an immediate concern in Argentina in those early days.

*Q: You left there in '64, was that right? Back to what?*

LEHFELDT: I came back to Personnel and was head of the Latin American personnel assignments.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about Latin American personnel? I've never served in Latin America. You know when I put the question to people who've served in Washington, in the Department of State, I sometimes ask them to rank the bureaus. ARA, the Latin American bureau, always ranks kind of at the bottom, not because it's so awful but it's sort of off by itself, and it seems almost incestuous. Maybe it's because they have these major crises one after another or something to sharpen the thing. I don't know. Do you have any feel about that?*

LEHFELDT: Latin America, you're quite right, was not the apple of every promising young Foreign Service officer's eye. It was only with the advent of the Alliance for Progress that it began to get some of the attention from first-rate personnel, that it should have merited as our front step here in the United States. But they added to their own problems.

For instance, when Tom Mann was Assistant Secretary, he was Kennedy's Assistant Secretary for ARA. Tom wanted to be sure that at any given time an American businessman could walk into an American post and be greeted by someone, whether he'd been there one day or 5 years, who (a) spoke the language fluently; (b) knew the local milieu; (c) could be helpful to the guys. That was his real desire. With the result that we became pretty much a closed corporation, people couldn't get out, people couldn't get in.

I remember Dean Hinton, when he was one of the stars of the European firmament, wanted to get a Latin American assignment. One of my DASs Don Palmer, wanted me to assign him somewhere. He was, at that point, an FSO-2, I think. I couldn't get anybody to accept him. He didn't speak Spanish, not a great linguist in any case. However good he was, they just weren't going to take a chance on him.

Similarly, I was able to, with the help of the Soviet bureau, the Eastern European crowd, able to get assigned from Latin America a few officers into Russian language and area training. So that they could get to Moscow or to satellite posts, get to know something about that then come back to Latin America. Kempton Jenkins, for instance, there were one or two others.

Those were unusual placements. By and large, when you are in Latin America you stayed in Latin America. It was only when we got to the diversification of assignments, at the junior officer level, that it became possible to really interlard our various assignments.

*Q: Did you have a problem getting junior officers to go to Latin America?*

LEHFELDT: No, we didn't have a problem because at that point discipline was still in place. They went where they were sent. If you know the panel system, we did create a junior officer panel in those days, so that on their first assignments they were able to sort of split the pie amongst the various bureaus. When we got to them, their second

assignments, it became more important what they themselves wanted, and what their language abilities were, and how well they'd done someplace else and so on.

We contended rather freely. It was a complicated sort of thing but it was a workable system.

We had one of the major, during my two years in personnel, one of the major world problems, at least for the United States. And that was the Dominican Republic episode. At that point I had sort of carte blanche. We had two places to send people—Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. For a while the Dominican Republic took precedence over Vietnam, not long.

We built up that post fairly well, very quickly, with good officers. Many of them stayed in Latin America.

*Q: How about the women and minorities at that time, was it a concern?*

LEHFELDT: No, minorities weren't a concern. There weren't any, frankly. Women—we had some successful women officers, some junior women officers. I assigned the first lady DCM in the Service, Jean Wilkowski, whom I talked John Jova into accepting as his DCM in Tegucigalpa. The first lady DCM in the history of the Service. Even Jean didn't realize that until I told her a couple of years ago. Maybe she didn't realize my role in that. I guess she knew she was the first lady DCM.

When ARA inherited the Caribbean countries, Eileen Donovan was the first Ambassador to Barbados, eventually, she had been Consul General. But it took a lot of doing on the State Department side to get the White House to back down. I think they wanted to send a friend of the Democrats but I'm not sure.

But no, it wasn't anything that concerned us and probably wrongly so, but it didn't.

*Q: So you left Personnel in '66 and went off to...*

LEHFELDT: To Naples.

Now some of this was driven by the fact that I had a deaf boy to educate. I had wanted to be assigned to London because the best school in the world, for the oral system of deaf education, was at that time in London. That's the lip-reading oral system. It was the Woodford School for Deaf Children, later known as the Winston Churchill School.

So I had, for instance, I had a couple of places. I could have gone to Africa as a DCM, one of the ambassadors wanted me. But we couldn't manage to get a 4 and a half year old boy from dark Africa to London to school all by himself. I certainly couldn't afford to pay for it all, to pay for someone to go with him.

Indeed the whole question of handicapped children's education allowance was totally inadequate at the time. I had to pay for a good deal of the early years education, until we made a case to the Department—that away from post education for handicapped children was somehow an obligation to be assumed by the Department.

*Q: When did this happen?*

LEHFELDT: In the mid-'60s, '66 thereabouts.

At any rate, Homer Byington, who was the consul general in Naples, needed a new deputy principal officer. I had known Homer, he was DCM in Spain when I was consul in Bilbao; he was on my board when I entered the Foreign Service; and he knew something about me. While his wife, Jane, didn't know Mariella particularly, he figured that I would be all right. The Department thought I would be all right too because I could let him go on about his yachting and so forth, and run the consulate. Keep the staff from him and him from the staff, which is what my role was.

Homer was a very conservative, hard-working bright guy in many ways. His wife was certainly conservative, hard-nosed, very bright, a trained lawyer. They knew Naples as no one could.

*Q: He was born there, his father was born there.*

LEHFELDT: His grandfather was born there, his father was not. His grandfather said that anybody who goes into the Foreign Service is nuts. His great-grandfather had been assigned to Naples. He was a reporter at the Battle of Gettysburg. He took charge of the telegraph office and locked everybody else out, and sent the first word of the Norths' victory, I guess, or at least the standoff. That they had the South to clean up at any rate, to the New York, I forget which one it was, New York Post or one of them. He was later awarded, assigned or given a post to Naples as sort of a lagniappe.

Homer had run afoul of the Kennedys at the beginning of World War II. It's a funny tale.

*Q: What happened?*

LEHFELDT: He was in the embassy at Belgrade. He was duty officer one weekend and was down at the office. These two scruffy young men came wandering through and the guard called Homer and said, “These two kids are here and they want to read the classified reading file.”

Homer went down and talked to them and said, “Hell, no.”

They said, “Well, our father lets us do it all the time. I don't know why you won't.”

It turned out they were Joe and Jack Kennedy from London. At any rate, they never forgot him. Joe died but Jack never forgot him. When Kennedy was elected, Homer had been first ambassador to what was then Malaysia. He wasn't about to get another ambassadorial post. So the old school network took care of him, assigned him as consul

general to Naples which didn't require Senate or White House action. He stayed there happily from 1961 to about 1974.

*Q: Could you talk, I have to put in the record here, from '79 to '81 I was Consul General in Naples and everybody talked about Homer Byington, not in particularly glowing terms. Could you talk about how they are? He's now dead but one of the icon figures, almost a mythical figure in the Foreign Service, particularly his connection with Naples. Could you describe how he lived, some of the stories about him?*

LEHFELDT: He was well connected. It was in the old aristocratic circles that he was best connected. He could speak Neapolitan dialect better than almost many of our employees in the consulate. So he entertained. They had the Villa Pavoncelli to begin with, which was an old palazzo. Of course Mrs. Byington had lots of money, they entertained well. I hesitate to use the word “royally” but they did and they got along well with the Admirals and Generals of AFSOUTH.

But the problems of keeping up an old villa, and getting the Department to support it in the manner in which it was necessary, led them to eye the top two floors of the consulate building. I presume that you lived there too. I was there during that transformation. It was an experience. I think they created a very nice representative set of digs for a good Consul General. It may not have been good for somebody with a family, I don't know. It was not to everyone's taste because his successor first covered up all the beautiful tiles. They were treacherous out on the deck.

He and Jane, like I say, knew all the old aristocracy well. Fred Reinhardt was ambassador at the time in Rome, was an old friend of theirs. Doug MacArthur, in Vienna, was an old friend. A lot of these folks would come back and forth. They would go off on yacht trips together. He had his boat just across the way there. He could keep up his own with the high-style admirals with their barges. In terms of society, it was fine. He knew the Prefetto

and the other people very well, he entertained them well, they appeared to like him. I mean, you know, what's there to report on particularly? And he didn't.

*Q: There really isn't anything. It's really one keeping up appearances and also the passport, the visa business.*

LEHFELDT: You didn't see what I did to that place, maybe someone told you about it. They probably all retired by the time you got there.

When I got there we had all the passport and citizenship records going back to about 1875. An enormous file that took 5 people to manage. Of course by that time all of those records should have been destroyed. I destroyed them and cleared it all out. We went through them, of course, and rescued what needed to be rescued. But the local employees were heartbroken when I did that because that was their baby.

*Q: Also it requires intensive work, intensive. Jobs, of course, the major function in Naples of anything was to create jobs. That's what everything revolved about—jobs.*

LEHFELDT: I don't know.

Back to the Byingtons again. They were pillars of the Anglican church there, the little chapel. I don't know if Father Willy was still there when you were there or not.

*Q: I don't remember.*

LEHFELDT: I became a, what do they call them, I forgot, it was a funny name, largely at Homer's behest. They insisted before we even got there that we commit to take a villa that had been in the hands of the consulate for several years. I think it was finally given up to the French consul general, or the French consulate.

I had no real problem with the way Homer operated. He didn't bother me very much. I had a good political officer usually. Peter de Vos was one such, Dave Engel was another

such. We had a decent commercial operation. The names escape me now. The consular operation was well run by Margaret Fagan. Of course one of the guys later ended up in jail, Steve Vitale. I had to fire our senior local employee at one point, Corrado D'ambrosio.

*Q: Famous figure.*

LEHFELDT: We caught him. We had a big health operation there, you know, the examinations. We had a big maritime administration, coast guard operation there. It was a big post for a consulate general. It's now down to practically nothing.

*Q: How did Byington relate? I heard stories about how he cleared everybody out who were living up in the consulate building and all that.*

LEHFELDT: Nobody wanted to live there anyway. They were nice enough apartments. Yes, he did clear them all out, no question about it. But in order to provide a good representational set of quarters for the consul general, the Department was persuaded.

*Q: I think it made sense because, also, later in my era, protection became a problem.*

LEHFELDT: Security was a problem.

*Q: This was secure.*

You know I gained the impression—I went to Naples as sort of an outsider. I'd been consul general in Seoul, Korea. I came there, I was not a European hand, particularly I was a Balkan hand, so I was kind of an outsider. I had the feeling in Italy, particularly the political reporting, in those days anyway there was no real change in anything. The same party was in power. Our embassy in Rome would get very much involved in the minutiae of the political life which didn't mean a thing as far as American policy was concerned.

LEHFELDT: There was a periodic “crisi.”

*Q: You had a crisis, certainly more than one a year.*

LEHFELDT: I would go off around the consular district once in a while. Peter de Vos went around with me once. We would stop in Catanzaro and in Consenza and in all those great places and talk to the various political types. Put together some local color and what was happening with the local parties. But it didn't amount to a hill of beans.

The major role of the consulate general, at that point, was maintaining relations with the Sixth Fleet and AFSOUTH. To make sure that they were well treated and so on. That's precisely what we did. We had a political adviser, as you know, I don't know who was there in your day. Bob Gordon was the POLMIL guy in Rome, he used to come down every once in a while. Phil Axelrod and Arnold Freshman and Dan Brewster were the POLADs about the time that I was there.

Everybody was busy with the exception of Homer and me. We were there to respond, it was a pleasant place.

*Q: You went to Tehran. There you have an extensive oral history, is that correct?*

LEHFELDT: That's right.

*Q: Can I get a copy of that?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, it's the Iran Project of the Columbia University Oral History Project.

*Q: Do you have a copy by any chance? I can make a copy of it.*

LEHFELDT: I think I have a transcript of that, I know I do. Let me dig it out and make a copy.

*Q: Actually, I'll refer to that, I think.*

LEHFELDT: That pretty much covers my days in Tehran. Especially in the oil negotiation days in the early part of the 1970s and up to the revolution, including the revolution. As a matter of fact, I'd like to read that over and see what I said.

*Q: I'll put this in record then. We will stop at this point because you retired after that.*

LEHFELDT: I retired and went back to Iran as a businessman, as vice president for the region for General Electric Company. That's why I was there until the revolution.

*Q: Does that cover that too?*

LEHFELDT: That covers that.

*Q: We can stop at this point.*

End of interview